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2000

Review of *Relics, Prayer, and Politics in Medieval Venetia: Romanesque Painting in the Crypt of Aquileia Cathedral*, by Thomas E. A. Dale

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Kinney, Dale. Review of *Relics, Prayer, and Politics in Medieval Venetia: Romanesque Painting in the Crypt of Aquileia Cathedral*, by Thomas E. A. Dale. *Speculum* 75, no. 4 (2000): 913-915.

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and annotates this material with the sigla D, E, and/or R (the last for the *Historia regum*) to indicate the appearances of the item. Many readers will find this table to be particularly useful, and it and similar tables, plus his presentation of a readable text of the D version of the chronicle uniform with MSS A and B, and eventually with MSS C, E, and F, make Cubbin's efforts necessary and valuable to students of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

PATRICK W. CONNER, West Virginia University

THOMAS E. A. DALE, *Relics, Prayer, and Politics in Medieval Venetia: Romanesque Painting in the Crypt of Aquileia Cathedral*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997. Pp. xiv, 170 plus 8 color plates and 160 black-and-white figures. \$79.50.

Aquileia is northeast of Venice, between that city and Trieste on the Cape of Istria. Art historically it is known for the remarkable floor mosaics surviving from its fourth-century two-halled cathedral and for the equally remarkable paintings in the crypt that was inserted into the southern hall in a medieval rebuilding. Especially striking are the dramatic and affective scenes from Christ's Passion painted at almost eye level on the crypt's perimeter wall and the simulated curtains just below them, decorated with drawings of profane subjects. The powerfully expressive Passion scenes tend to overwhelm the ensemble; they have been called "the supreme examples" of the synthesis of "Byzantine and late Romanesque mannerism" typical of mural art in the Veneto in the twelfth century (Otto Demus, *Romanesque Mural Painting* [New York, 1970], p. 89). Art historical analysis, concomitantly, has focused on the calibration of Byzantine and Romanesque elements in the mix and on defining the relationship of the authors of the other paintings on the vaults and walls to the superior "Master of the Passion," "one of the most elevated personalities of the twelfth century" (Giuseppe Bergamini, in *La pittura in Italia: L'altomedioevo* [Milan, 1994], p. 141).

In the first extended study of these paintings in English, Thomas Dale rejects a hierarchical approach in favor of an attempt to identify thematic unities that bind all of the images in the crypt into a "program." In fact he finds four programs, or four "elements" of one program: an "intercessory program" comprising images of Christ, the Virgin Mary, and St. Hermagoras, Aquileia's first bishop, on the vaults over the central aisle and standing saints in spandrels below them; an "ecclesiological" program embodied in scenes from the life of St. Hermagoras spread over the rest of the vaults; a devotional program in the Byzantinizing Passion scenes on the walls, which Dale associates with the Western doctrine of the *compassio* of the Virgin Mary; and an allegorical program of *psychomachia* in the profane imagery on the fictive curtains. Through the curtains Dale sees the themes of the minor programs come together: "the discrete *exempla* of the *Psychomachia* function as allegorical veils that reveal in . . . sketches of terrestrial struggle the essential promise of redemption offered above them by the full-color images of Christ's Passion, the *Compassio* of the Virgin [program 3], the martyrdoms of the local saints [program 2], and the hierarchy of saints of the universal church [program 1]" (p. 76). In this summation the paintings appear to be about the spiritual edification of the prayerful viewer, but Dale stresses more another purpose. His longest chapter is devoted to the second, "ecclesiological" program, which he determines to be a weapon of "ecclesiastical politics" wielded in the jurisdictional battle between Aquileia and the see of Grado, a satellite of Venice. For most of the twelfth century the see of Grado was recognized by Rome as hierarchically superior to Aquileia, but in 1177–80 Patriarch Ulrich II persuaded Pope Alexander III to reverse the jurisdictional order in favor of Aquileia. From details in the pictorial biography of St. Hermagoras, such as the pallium he wears in the scene of his consecration, Dale deduces that the hagiographic images make a case for Aquileia's superior authority. Their message is that Aquileia

leia precedes Grado, as well as Venice, because of its evangelization by the apostle Mark (before Grado or Venice existed) and the foundation of its see by St. Mark's disciple St. Hermagoras.

Framing the four core chapters devoted to Dale's interpretation are four others, on the history of the see of Aquileia, the history and function of the crypt, the style of the figural paintings, and the ornament. The crypt was apparently dug out in the ninth century, but the relics of St. Hermagoras and his successor St. Fortunatus were not placed there until after Bishop Poppo seized them from Grado in 1024. An altar of St. Hermagoras was endowed in 1028. The paintings must be significantly later, however. The only firm date is a graffito dated 1217, establishing a *terminus ante quem*. A pair of dissertations from the late 1960s, written at Trieste and Vienna, argued for dates around 1180 and 1200 respectively on the grounds of stylistic similarities to wall paintings and mosaics in the Veneto and around the Adriatic coast. Dale prefers the earlier date, which puts the murals in the last years of the pontificate of Ulrich II (1161–82), when “the historical moment . . . can hardly have been more propitious” for paintings with the program he reconstructs (p. 56). There is an evident, not necessarily unacceptable, circularity in the way the program is defined in accordance with the political aspirations of this patriarch and then cited to confirm the dating of the paintings to his time in office. Even if one objects to the circularity, it is not crucial, as Dale's political reading of the murals would be just as plausible for many moments in the history of Aquileia's rivalry with Grado and Venice, which began in the ninth century and continued long after the twelfth.

Dale is a scrupulous scholar; and lacking independent documentation of Ulrich II's involvement with the paintings, he does not directly claim him as their sponsor. His caution creates a gray area in his analysis, which never addresses the question of who devised the comprehensive program. Unlike many prior descriptions of the ensemble, which imply a collection of also-rans (“inevitably on a plane of marked inferiority,” Bergamini, p. 141) scrambling to fill in the areas left unpainted by the charismatic master, Dale's thesis requires a planner who dictated not only the subjects of the paintings but their styles. For just as he identifies four minor programs, all subordinate to an overriding one, so Dale discerns four distinct styles, all adopted manners of a single main style, and all produced by one “workshop.” He calls the four styles “modes.” Although he is more self-aware in his use of this rhetorical term than many art historians, Dale does not avoid the implication that his artisan-painters must have been equally self-conscious rhetoricians. This seems to me to be the paradigm's Achilles' heel. Henry Maguire's classic book on Byzantine rhetoric and painting showed how the two could be correlated without slipping into anachronistic assumptions about painters: “techniques of rhetoric passed from the schoolroom into the literature of the church, and from the literature of the church onto its walls” (*Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* [Princeton, N.J., 1981], p. 4). The germ of a comparable analysis is present in Dale's review of the literature of *compassio* (pp. 60–63) and his references to the conventions of hagiography (pp. 46–48), but these are not brought into productive interaction with his definition of modes; instead, the “narrative modes” of the Passion images and the life of St. Hermagoras are characterized principally in terms of perceived treatments of “space” and by implied association with the reified categories “Byzantine” and “Romanesque” (p. 33).

Comparing Dale's book with Maguire's incidentally demonstrates the changing production values of Princeton University Press. The text of *Art and Eloquence* is more elegantly laid out, with a refined font and wide margins, but the illustrations, though made from good photographs, are printed on low-contrast, lightly coated text stock, which renders them drearily gray. *Relics, Prayer, and Politics* has many more illustrations, printed on glossy paper, including eight color plates. The black-and-white images are much sharper, but the color plates have been made from photographs taken by the author. Doubtless this

saved some cost, but the lack of professional equipment shows up as murky brown, especially in the images of the Deposition. Readers who want to know why its painter is so famous will have to consult reproductions in other publications, like Electa's *Pittura in Italia*.

Printing aside, there is much to praise about Thomas Dale's book. Although it is based on a dissertation, it is written as a proper book, in which the results of an enormous amount of labor are reduced to concise, well-formulated chapters that work cumulatively and sequentially to persuade the reader of the thesis. Detailed accounts of each image are placed in an appended "Iconographic Catalogue" to avoid encumbering the text. The text is only as long as it needs to be to make the argument, which is a delightful difference from the logorrheic tendencies of dissertations. The argument itself is carefully constructed in perfect consonance with the evidence gleaned by research. Those of us who were brought up to think that the power of images lies somewhere in the capacities of their creators might be left with some nostalgia for "the Master," who is tacitly demoted to the rank and file of an egalitarian "workshop" in which anyone might be assigned the "mode" that makes the Passion images so effective. In fact, we might resist the demotion, continue to insist that these paintings are somehow superior to the others in the crypt, and persist in our desire to know why. But this is hardly the author's fault, and it does not diminish the achievement of an admirable, useful, and readable book.

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JOSEPH A. DANE, *Who Is Buried in Chaucer's Tomb? Studies in the Reception of Chaucer's Book*. East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1998. Pp. ix, 309; black-and-white frontispiece, black-and-white figures, and 1 table. \$45.95.

Now over six hundred years past his death, Chaucer remains the center of a prospering industry, anchoring syllabi as often the only representative of the Middle Ages, inviting the application of all manner of modern scholarly tools developed for other figures and their periods, and inspiring more books and articles than any other single English figure before Shakespeare. The title of Joseph Dane's book specifically refers to the poet's tomb in Westminster Abbey but might also be seen to be directed at the monument on which this industry rests. What textual and documentary remains does Chaucerianism, as Dane calls it, encase? What kind of justification do these remains provide for the history of critical veneration? What exactly does this Chaucerian tomb contain?

Beginning with early-modern accounts of the Westminster monument and concluding with a glance at fine press editions of the past century, Dane's study offers a chronologically arranged series of essays on various aspects of what he calls Chaucer's book. By that he means not a single manuscript, text, or edition but the totality and multiplicity of those historically realized forms and the abstract ideas that gave rise to them or provide means for their understanding. This intentionally broad concept constitutes the coherent rationale of what might best be considered a sequence of variations on a theme, and in that regard the book can just as profitably be sampled for Dane's views on individual topics as read straight through.

In the opening essay, which gives the book its title, Dane surveys the contradictions of various early-modern accounts of Chaucer's tomb, seeing the contrasts between the inscriptions' illegibility and the critical certainty of their readings as emblematic of a larger disjunction in Chaucerianism between material remains and interpretive endeavors. Subsequent chapters examine the attribution of the preface in Thynne's 1532 *Workes* to Brian Tuke, the typography of early Chaucer editions in relation to Continental printing habits, and the attribution of the *Testament of Love* to Thomas Usk, particularly with respect to